

# *Community Preservation Act*

Duxbury Clipper

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## **Community Preservation**

Duxbury's land use committee seeks to preserve three out of every ten acres of remaining undeveloped land — not a bad batting average unless you're Nomar Garciaparra.

The group proposes that Duxbury sign onto the Community Preservation Act as the vehicle to preserve our open space.

We hope that goal can be reached, but urge caution before hitching our star to this new state program.

The Community Preservation Act was signed into law earlier this year. It is a matching fund program that enables towns to raise property taxes (requiring Town Meeting approval in the form of an override) from one to three percent above Prop. 1/2 limits. The revenue would go toward the purchase of open space, with ten percent each allocated to historic preservation and affordable housing.

Duxbury would not be the town it is had we not embraced stringent zoning and made the landmark decision in 1970 to steer a course of conservation. We can now look back 30 years ago and say with certainty that the purchase of over 2,500 acres of open space was a bold and propitious decision. However we don't want to look back in another 30 years and realize that in our quest for open space we have priced ourselves out of our own town with perpetual property tax hikes.

Duxbury and other Commonwealth communities would have been much better served had the original version of the Community Preservation Act been preserved, instead of suffering defeat from special interest groups. Its funding mechanism relied on a transfer tax instead of a property tax surcharge and has been highly successful on Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard.

There is a reason that Duxbury has purchased open space in "fits and starts" as described at Monday night's selectman's meeting. When times are good and the town is in sound financial order, we've been able to purchase and preserve more open space. When the economy turns sour as it did in the late 1980s and early 1990s, open space becomes less of a priority.

Selectman John Tuffy raised this issue this week. "If this [the Community Preservation Act] was in place and we had to close schools and close fire stations because we didn't have the money, we would continue to tax ourselves to buy land," Tuffy said.

A review of the committee's final report and a closer inspection of the new program may well alleviate those qualms.

In the meantime, we applaud the efforts of the Land Acquisition Committee and the compelling presentation by Chairman David Hines. Whatever means the town eventually takes to preserve our open space we all agree that we must continue to be diligent in preserving the character of Duxbury. The growth pressures we faced in 1970 have not gone away. The expansion of Route 3, potential conversion of cranberry bogs and the growing metropolis of Plymouth all indicate that the fight against sprawl will not soon go away.